Post 12/30/67

Garrison Summons 3 'Witnesses'

JIM GARRISON
... declines comment

District Attorney Jim Garrison subpoenaed three "material witnesses" yesterday in New Orleans in his controversial investigation of an alleged plot to assassinate President Kennedy.

Meanwhile, the Defense Department announced in Washington that the Army is investigating how medical records on Garrison reached the hands of a Chicago Tribune reporter. These records are confidential unless the person concerned permits their release.

Chicago Tribune reporter Russell Freeburg, in a copyrighted story published yesterday, wrote that Garrison was discharged from the Army in 1951 as totally unfit for military duty because of mental problems.

Garrison himself declined comment yesterday on the Tribune story. But his top aide, Charles A. Ward, denied its accuracy. A source close to Garrison said charges that he suffered mental disorders were raised during his 1965 campaign for re-election as District Attorney and discredited.

Garrison said the trio he subpoenaed yesterday were "in a unique position to observe activities relative to the assassination." The men were identified as Loran Eugene Hallof Kernville, Calif., Lawrence John Howard Jr. of Los Angeles and Thomas Edward Beckham of Omaha.

The District Attorney asserted none of the three had been questioned by the Warren Commission, which investigated President Kennedy's death and concluded Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin.

The subpoenas alleged that Hall and Howard checked into the Dallas YMCA in October, 1963, and remained in that city until the time of the assassination. Hall is said to have brought a weapon to Dallas shortly before Kennedy's death. The subpoenas stated the two men were associated in Dallas with Jack Ruby—who killed Oswald and has since died—and with others "believed" to have been "involved in the assassination," including Oswald.

The Garrison subpoenas also alleged that Hall and Howard were associated in New Orleans with the late David Ferrie, a pilot who had been another target of Garrison's investigation. And they claimed the two men had taken part in CIA-sponsored guerrilla training in Florida for raids on Cuba.

As for Beckham, the subpoena alleged he was seen in Dallas in November, 1963, with a number of people "believed to have played a part" in the Kennedy killing.

Beckham was also linked with Ferrie in New Orleans during 1963 when both were members of the "Old Orthodox Catholic Church of North America"—a small sect.

Hall, informed of the subpoena, commented, "You're kidding." He denied ever meeting Oswald, Ruby, Ferrie "or anyone else involved in the assassination or anyone ever mentioned by Garrison or anybody else."

The subpoenaed trio were ordered to appear before an Orleans Parish grand jury Feb. 1-2. They were promised immunity from arrest for anything that happened prior to their entering Louisiana.

Garrison already has accused two other men, Clay Shaw of New Orleans and recently Edgar Eugene Bradley of Los Angeles, of taking part in an assassination plot.

He also asserted yesterday that 10 men—"some of whom we have identified as participants in the assassination"—were arrested in Dallas's Dealey Plaza minutes after the shooting and later were "quietly released."

Late yesterday the Pentagon, in response to questions about Garrison's military record in the wake of the Chicago Tribune story, released a brief chronology of his service noting he was "released from active duty by reason of physical disability in the grade of captain on Oct. 31, 1951." Garrison resigned from the National Guard last February as a lieutenant colonel.

The Pentagon said information in personal, medical and other such files cannot be released to the public without the written permission of the individual, and added: "The Army is conducting an investigation to determine if any such information about James C. Garrison's service has been released from official Army sources."